

110943Z Jul 03

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 001419

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/PDPA FOR DALTON, MITCHELL AND SIMS
NSC FOR JENDAYI FRAZER
LONDON FOR GURNEY
PARIS FOR NEARY
NAIROBI FOR PFLAUMER

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PREL KPAQ KMDR ZI

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION PRESIDENT BUSH'S VISIT TO AFRICA;
HARARE

¶1. There has been an outpouring of articles, op-ed and opinion pieces in the mainstream newspapers following talks on Zimbabwe between President George W. Bush and his South African counterpart Thabo Mbeki, including President Bush's visit to Botswana, in the leading newspapers published on July 11. Excerpts of the articles follow:

¶2. Under headline "Bush's statement a shift in U. S. policy? the government-controlled daily "Chronicle" (07/11) carried the following op-ed by Kennedy Mavhumasha on page 4:

"United States President, George W. Bush this week performed a quick climb-down from his earlier anti-Zimbabwe rhetoric, but analysts say he must now match his public statements with practical measures to normalize diplomatic relations with Harare. . . But political analysts interviewed. . . yesterday were quick to point out that the government should give it time, as the U. S. President's words might fail to translate into a shift in his country's policy towards Zimbabwe. . . Dr. Godfrey Chikowore, a University of Zimbabwe international relations lecturer said: `The change is welcome but we want to see if the statement was one of principle and not just a matter of buying time. . . It will be unwise for us to bank on statements and promises. Let us give him time. . .' A lecturer at the National University of Science and Technology, Dr. Lawton Hikwa, said: `It is difficult to say at the moment but there is a significant appreciation that whatever Mr. Bush has heard about the situation here was exaggerated. Perhaps as time goes on, we could see some objectivity. . . .'"

¶3. Under headline "Visit gives Bush rude awakening" the government-controlled daily "The Herald" (07/11) carried the following analysis by Lovemore Mataire on page 9:

"United States President Mr. George W. Bush's image making visit to Africa suffered a major setback when he openly expressed confidence in South African President Mr. Thabo Mbeki's mediation in Zimbabwe. Mr. Bush's statements were in sharp contrast to his and that of his Secretary of State Mr. Collin (sic) Powell's earlier statements urging South Africa to exert more pressure on Zimbabwe to have a transitional arrangement in place. . . Mr. Bush's endorsement of Mr. Mbeki as an 'honest broker' in Zimbabwe fell short of admitting that he had been misled about the real situation prevailing in the country. . . Cautious of not treading on unpopular track, Mr. Bush found himself with no option but to back down from his previous hard-line stance towards President Mugabe. . . But Mr. Bush's public support for Mbeki's Zimbabwe policy appeared to mark a personal defeat for (Morgan) Tsvangirai (MDC leader), who has criticized the South African leader for 'choosing to be in solidarity with a dictator. . . .'"

¶4. Under headline "Where will Tsvangirai turn to now?" the independent daily "The Daily News" (07/11) carried the following opinion piece by Kuthula Matshazi, who is based in Toronto, Canada, on page 10:

"South African President Thabo Mbeki's words are coming back to haunt us. The resolution of Zimbabwe's problems lies squarely with Zimbabweans. United States President George W. Bush implicitly endorsed this view when he met with Mbeki on Wednesday in South Africa. . . Where will Tsvangirai turn to now that Bush has embraced Mbeki's position? In other words, Bush has told Tsvangirai to deal

with Mbeki. . . ."

15. Under headline "MDC leader bows to Uncle Sam's might" the government-controlled daily "Chronicle" (07/11) carried the following article on page one:

"Opposition MDC leader Morgan Tsvangirai was yesterday forced to withdraw 'angry' remarks he made against President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa after the United States endorsed Pretoria's quiet diplomacy on Zimbabwe. Tsvangirai. . .back-tracked on his earlier outburst in which he accused Mbeki of being 'mischievous' and trying to 'buy time' for the Zimbabwe government. His climb-down came following the announcement by President George W. Bush that the U. S. was now of 'one mind' with South Africa and would leave Mbeki the task of helping resolve Zimbabwe's challenges. . . ."

16. Under headline "Botswana backs Zim: `. . .no need for outsiders to interfere in Zimbabwe's problem's'" the lead article in the government-controlled daily "The Herald" (07.11) reads:

"Botswana sees no need for outsiders to interfere in the problems affecting Zimbabwe. Minister of Foreign Affairs Mr. Mombati Merafe said soon after the meeting between President George Bush. . .and President Festus Mogae of Botswana that Zimbabwe was a sovereign state with a government which came into place through a legitimate process adding that the situation in the country required persuasion and that no one should dictate what should be done. Mr. Merafe stressed that the position of Zimbabwe has not changed and the visit by the U. S. President to Botswana and the region in general would not change, alter or influence the cordial bilateral relations between Zimbabwe and Botswana. The U. S. President yesterday expressed satisfaction and concurred with President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa's policy of quiet diplomacy on Zimbabwe. . . ."

SULLIVAN